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SYMPHONY VILLAGE CLUBHOUSE

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*From the Baltimore Sun*

## Supporters on hand, council chief makes bid

### Flanked by union officials, politicians, Rawlings-Blake vies for 4-year term

By John Fritze  
Sun Reporter

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Joined by some of the city's largest unions and political figures, Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake, the three-term member of the Baltimore City Council, announced this morning that she will seek a full, four-year term as council president.

Rawlings-Blake, 37, has served as president of the council since Sheila Dixon became mayor in January. Today, with her family sharing the stage, Rawlings-Blake said she is committed to improving education and reducing crime in the city.

"Too many children have been left behind. It is time to go back and get them," said Rawlings-Blake, standing in a park adjacent to City Hall.

Leadership and members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, a group that represents many city workers, were present at the event. So was Paul M. Blair Jr., the head of the city's police union, Sean R. Malone, a close aide of Gov. Martin O'Malley's, and top aides to Mayor Sheila Dixon.

Rawlings-Blake said earlier she is committed to expanding the nonprofit Healthy Neighborhoods program, which assists communities on the edge of instability, and to granting more autonomy to school principals.

Also in the race are City Councilman Kenneth N. Harris Sr. and community activist Michael Sarbanes, both of whom announced earlier this year. Because Baltimore is overwhelmingly Democratic, the president's race, like the mayor's race, will likely be decided by the Sept. 11 primary election.

One of Rawlings-Blake's greatest political assets going into this year's election is O'Malley's support. While O'Malley has largely stayed out of the mayor's race, he has been heavily involved in Rawlings-Blake's campaign and has attended her fundraisers.

For seven years, Rawlings-Blake served as vice president under O'Malley -- a position that, informally, made her the mayor's legislative floor leader.

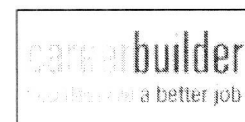
Rawlings-Blake was 25 when she took office in 1995 as the youngest person ever to win a council election. Four years later, she encouraged her father to endorse O'Malley, then a colleague on the council, for mayor. The backing of the powerful African-American delegate boosted O'Malley's credibility as a white candidate in a predominantly black city.

Since then, Rawlings-Blake has helped secure funding for the Park Heights master plan, the city's most recent strategy to revitalize the neighborhood. In 2005, she sponsored legislation that added excessive noise to the city's public nuisance law, which would allow police to temporarily condemn properties repeatedly cited for noise violations.

More recently, she introduced a resolution calling on Mayor Sheila Dixon to spend \$2 million from a city surplus fund for police recruitment -- a funding source that Dixon has objected to using. This month, she called for the creation of a new fund that would allow homeowners in certain parts of the city to receive matching grants for renovation projects, an initiative the administration has agreed to fund.

Still, her opponents have questioned her commitment to dealing with the city's most pressing problems, including the city's school system and the rising violence this year. Harris, who announced his candidacy in January, argued that Rawlings-Blake hadn't been actively involved in those issues until this year.

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"I'm going to be running on leadership and not legacy," Harris said. "My record is far better than anyone who has entered the race to date for the office of City Council president. We need someone who can hit the ground running."

As vice president, Rawlings-Blake represented the 6th District -- a district in Northwest Baltimore that begins at Charles Street between Cold Spring Lane and Northern Parkway and curves southwest, reaching down toward Gwynns Falls Park. The district encompasses a wide range of neighborhoods, including upscale, mostly white Roland Park and the distressed, mostly black Park Heights.

Raised in the Ashburton section of Northwest Baltimore, Rawlings-Blake graduated from Western High School in 1988, Oberlin College in 1992 and the University of Maryland School of Law in 1995. Rawlings-Blake spent a year as an attorney at the Legal Aid Bureau. After seven years as an attorney with the city's branch of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, she left the position when she became council president.

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← **Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake**

(Sun photo by Monica Lopossay)

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